



## **Gambling**

**Position Statement Adopted: 10/5/76**

**Revised: 10/19/82, 10/27/87, 10/30/00**

Because of our deep concern for family life and social values, the Montana Association of Churches:

- urges the Montana Legislature to study the social costs associated with gambling.
- opposes any attempt to expand authorized gambling;
- calls for the repeal of laws authorizing electronic gambling machines and devices in Montana;
- supports strict governmental control of all gambling enterprises in Montana
- calls for a repeal of the state or multi-state sponsored lotteries.

### **SUPPORTING STATEMENT**

In spite of the defeat of initiatives supporting expanded gambling, the Montana Legislature has continued to expand authorized gambling in Montana. The Montana Association of Churches has consistently opposed bills to authorize electronic gambling machines, and we now call for legislation to prohibit them.

The Montana Association of Churches is concerned about the expansion of gambling in Montana because of its social cost. Since Montana licenses electronic poker machines and authorizes several other forms of gambling, the State has the responsibility to look not only at the immediate financial benefits, but at the social costs as well. The State has the obligation to consider the results of its policies, determine the social costs, hold them up to public scrutiny and take actions to prevent or mitigate the effects of those policies.

The human suffering that has resulted from the increase in gambling in Montana is reflected by the establishment of Gamblers Anonymous groups. Montanans have also begun seeking treatment for compulsive gambling in alcohol and drug dependency programs. We are convinced that commercial gambling poses a serious threat to any social order. Non-productive in nature, gambling provides no essential services to a community. It undermines our economic and social order, places an added strain on the family structure, potentially corrupts government at all levels, and creates the potential for many related crime and law enforcement problems.